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ABSTRACT

The Netherlands' Basic School Education Act mandated that nursery and primary schools be structurally integrated into "basic schools" for children aged four to twelve by 1984. Inservice training courses, called IVB, were set up to prepare nursery and primary teachers for the new system according to the professional goals of continuity, extended concern, and school-based curriculum development. Since nursery and primary school teachers have separate training programs, the aims of IVB were to promote integrated curriculum skills, a common goal for the schools, and augmented capacities for self-renewal in the schools. Teams of teacher educators from nursery and primary teacher training institutions were recruited to provide two years of instruction at the school level. There have been several hindering factors which have impeded the training process: (1) the lack of cooperation between the nursery and elementary schools and between their training institutions; (2) no coordination with other, similar teacher training courses, which were started before IVB; (3) the constitutional right to freedom of education limits nationwide policy-making capabilities; (4) the need for flexibility in dealing with the different needs of schools and teachers; and (5) the inexperience of the IVB teacher teams. (FG)

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In-Service Training for the Integrated Basic School

Team-oriented in-service training and school-based curriculum development in the Netherlands for the 1980's.

by

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IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR THE INTEGRATED BASIC SCHOOL

Team-oriented in-service training and schoolbased curriculum development: the Dutch case IVB

Abstract

By 1984 nursery and primary schools in the Netherlands will be completely integrated into basic schools for children from four to twelve.
The Basic School Education Act requires the development of a school work plan based on the principle of continuous development for each pupil.
Teachers in nursery and primary schools must be prepared for the changes to come. This preparation is carried out by means of in-service training courses, which are set up by in-service training teams of Teacher Training Colleges in accordance with the needs of trainees and the goals of basic school education.

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Amsterdam, January 1981.

I BACKGROUND

a. Issues

By 1984 nursery and primary schools in the Netherlands will be structurally integrated into "basic schools" by the new Basic School Education Act. The educational principles of this new act could be summarized as follows.

(1) The principle of continuity. The new basic school must ensure an uninterrupted development of each pupil from the age of four to twelve. The two educational worlds of nursery schools on the one hand and the primary schools on the other are to be changed into one basic school world, according to the guiding principle of continuity.

(2) The principle of extended concern. An uninterrupted development for each pupil implies more attention for the individual and his or her abilities, his or her learning styles and difficulties, his or her interests and social background. The basic school must find proper ways and means for individualisation and differentation of teaching and learning activities. Compared with the current practise, this implies an extension of the field of the teacher's educational concern.

(3) The principle of schoolbased curriculum development. Each new basic school must clarify the school's educational goals, learning sequences within study fields or school subjects, the school organisational planning, the ways of evaluating, and so on, in a document called "the school work plan". This document may be compared with the Anglo-American "curriculum". The school work plan must be developed by a complete team of basic school teachers, and must

ensure the realisation of the principles of continuity and extended concern.

Within the history of primary school education in the Netherlands the integration of two types of schools is one of the greatest operations ever undertaken, especially in an educational sense, for basic schools will be established legally on an arbitrarily fixed date whereas the educational moulding may take several more years.

b. IVB-courses (aims, participants, program committee)

In-Service Training for the Integrated Basic School courses (in Dutch called IVB) are set up and designed to help nursery and primary school teachers with the educational aspects of the forthcoming integration of their up till now separate schools. So the aim of IVB-courses is the preparation of the integration. The chosen vehicle is curriculum development at the school level, taking into account the principles of continuity, extended concern, individualisation and differentiation.

Since Teachers Training Colleges did not train the now active teachers in skills concerning curriculum development and, what's more, since they educated their former students at two separate Colleges, one preparing for nursery schools and one for primary schools, the aim of IVB has been sub-divided into three main objectives.

(1) IVB must promote the establishment of what could be called "a basic school team with a common vision of what a basic school should be".

(2) IVB must promote the acquisition of curriculum development skills in view of the forthcoming legal regulation concerning the school work plan.

(3) IVB must promote the augmentation of the capacity for self-renewal within basic school teams in view of the continuous further moulding of the basic school.

The main characteristics of IVB can be described as follows. Each course takes two years, with a total of 120 lesson-hours. The organisation most commonly used is a series of 15 course meetings yearly. Each course group consists of two or three teams of teachers now active in separate nursery and primary schools who will operate as one basic school team within a few years. No participation on an individual basis is allowed. During the two years of IVB each course group follows the same basic pattern: first a period of curriculum clarification, then a period of curriculum improvement, and finally a period of curriculum change. Within each period various starting points may be chosen, for example, the pedagogical climate of the basic school, reading skills for younger and older pupils, individualisation of learning opportunities within a specific field of study, or school management. The interplay between the basic pattern and the various starting points makes up the fabric of IVB-courses. The teachers of IVB-courses are recruited from both nursery and primary Teachers Training Colleges. In fact, if a College wishes to incorporate an IVB-course in its curriculum, two cooperating Colleges must form an "in-service training team", consisting of educationists, pedagogues, and subject or study field experts, who are recruited from both Teachers Training Colleges on a fifty-fifty basis.

As of August 1980, 135 Colleges provide 93 in-service training teams which each take care an average of 3 IVB-courses.

The time table of the project: 80 courses started in 1979 and in 1980

300 courses. For 1981 600 are planned, for 1982 900, and so on until every nursery and primary school teacher has had the opportunity to participate in IVB. According to the planning, IVB will be ended in 1985-1986.

To provide the participants of IVB with ideas, materials and so on, the Dutch Ministry of Education has installed a Program Committee. The task of this committee is to advise the Minister of Education on three subjects:

(1) a framework for IVB-courses all over the nation

(2) the educational execution of an IVB-course

(3) the ways in which members of the in-service training teams can be supported preceding and during the execution of their courses.

This Program Committee consists of three full-time and seven parttime members and an office staff of three persons. The members of the committee are recruited mainly from Teacher Training Colleges.

c. Decisions to start IVB

The decision to start IVB-courses was made by the Ministry of Education after consultation with teachers' associations and other groups concerned, and with parliamentary approval. The decision to participate in IVB must be made by the nursery and primary school teachers and the governing board of their schools.

The decision to incorporate IVB in the curriculum of a Teachers Training College lies with that College and its governing board. However, these Colleges are not entirely free to choose as since 1975 in-service courses and in-service training have been one of the duties of these Colleges. IVB is the first tangible national result of this principle

regarding pre-service and in-service training of teachers.

d. Funds and support

The only group of IVB participants that receive additional funds and support are the Teachers Training Colleges. For each IVB-course four college lesson-hours are assigned to these Colleges. So if an in-service training team of eight persons takes care of four courses, sixteen lesson-hours will be given to the two cooperating Colleges. Each member of the team can get two lesson-hours. On top of this each team can claim a minimum of six lesson-hours for the coordination and administration of its IVB activities. To prepare the teams themselves for the execution of IVB each member of the team received two lesson-hours in 1979 and 1980. All these lesson-hours were assigned per week for the period of one year.

e. Evaluation

At this moment there are no efforts for external evaluation. A number of selected IVB-teachers has been asked to attempt internal evaluation. 24 out of 93 training teams have been chosen for evaluation, and six trainers have interviewed them regarding main subjects of their IVB experiences.

II ANALYSIS

The aim of IVB is to prepare for the new basic school. It tries to achieve this by means of training basic school teams towards school-based curriculum development. Skills relating to curriculum development have to be acquired and practised by members of coupled school teams during the course. Disturbing or hindering influences on the success of IVB could be summarized beforehand as: lack of organisational cooperation on various levels, lack of coordination with other innovation projects, the constitutional freedom of education, the varying entry situations of participating schools, lack of specialized knowledge regarding team-oriented in-service training courses.

(1) Lack of cooperation.

First of all, no cooperation on an educational level exists between nursery and primary schools. Two separate educational worlds have to be synthesized into one. Not an easy task as even within their own educational world teachers mostly tend to operate on an individual basis as a result of the responsibility they feel for their own class. Broadly speaking, no tradition of teamwork exists within the field of elementary education. The strategy to overcome this was to accept only complete teams of nursery and primary schools as IVB participants. Learning and working together within IVB could help to develop a spirit of working as one basic school team. Secondly, no cooperation has been achieved so far between most Colleges in charge of educational in-service courses. Even within each College no tradition of teamwork exists as far as in-service training is concerned. Educationists and experts within the school study fields mainly operate separately. The strategy to cope with this was to accept as IVB-teachers only teams of eight individuals, recruited on a fifty-fifty basis from

Teachers Training Colleges for the nursery and the primary schools. Within these teams a variety of disciplines should be represented, e.g. native language, arithmetic, social and natural sciences, arts and crafts, educational and pedagogical theory and methodology. Thirdly, no structural cooperation has been developed between the Colleges and the Local Educational Centres or Local School Advisory Centres or Local Teachers Centres. Up to now the latter have worked with teachers in order to promote the functioning of their schools. The activities and courses undertaken by these Centres could be labelled as in-service training activities, whereas Colleges had confined themselves to pre-service training only. The strategy to tackle this successfully involves three courses of action: encourage Colleges to confer with Centres with regard to IVB, inform all existing Centres and supply them with plans and materials, open the possibility of participation for staff members from the Centres.

(2) Lack of coordination.

IVB-courses are not the only initiatives for innovation regarding the new basic school. IVB may be called a relative late comer. There were already the national Activation Plan, the national Development Project Plan, the local activities initiated by Centres. Coordination was necessary: which project should a school team take on first ? Briefly, a two-way strategy has been followed to overcome this problem. First, an appeal was made to the Ministry of Education to work out a nationally coordinated innovation plan.

Up till now this has not been realized.

Secondly, IVB teaching teams were asked to develop their courses in accordance with the needs of participating nursery and primary school teachers. This fitted well in the Dutch principle of freedom

of education.

(3) The constitutional freedom of education.

The government of the Netherlands is obliged to fulfill the necessary conditions to enable governing bodies of schools to maintain and develop their schools. Decisions concerning renewal or innovation must be made by these governing bodies and not by the national government.

This principle is formulated in article 208 of the Dutch Constitution and has been labelled "freedom of education". As a consequence the responsibility for IVB-courses lies with the boards of Teacher Training Colleges and the decision to participate in IVB lies with the boards of nursery and primary schools. The aims of the new basic school and the aims of IVB can be determined by the national government with parliamentary approval, but not so the translation of these aims into long-term and short-term goals and objectives. From this point of view a nationally circulated frame-work for IVB must be limited as regards contents and methods. For this reason the IVB Program Committee developed an IVB Outline which roughly indicates the main goals and principles of IVB and sketches a line of approach. Furthermore the Committee supplies IVB in-service teams with proposals, suggestions and recommendations for the educational execution of an IVB-course.

(4) A variety of entry situations.

The various primary and nursery schools differ in many aspects. For instance, some of them have already started activities together to incorporate the ideas of the new basic school whereas others have undertaken nothing at all. Schools in an urban environment

differ from schools in the countryside. Schools with many pupils from foreign countries (e.g. Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Spain, Portugal, etc.) differ from schools with mainly Dutch pupils. Schools differ in size in different regions of the Netherlands owing to the density of population. All these differences are revealed when the IVB Outline is confronted with the needs of participating primary and nursery school teachers. To cope with this IVB teachers are asked to meet these needs. In this respect a heavy demand is made on the flexibility and inventiveness of IVB teachers.

(5) Competence of IVB teachers.

Trainers are recruited from Teacher Training Colleges and, generally speaking, they are not familiar with methods of adult education and methods of developing school curricula. They have to be prepared on these subjects themselves. On eight full days, spread out over one course-year, all IVB in-service teams had the opportunity to be informed by members of the committee and to discuss with them relevant aspects of IVB. Furthermore the IVB in-service teams could be and in fact still can be assisted/supported by the three major pedagogical centres in the Netherlands, i.e. APS, CPS and KPC, or the Local School Advisory Centres. Meanwhile it has become clear that the new task of the Colleges, i.e. in-service training courses, can be mastered only by a process of "learning by doing".

III CONCLUSION

The IVB process has been in operation since 1979. But the whole operation is such a gigantic one that it will come as no surprise that many problems still remain to be solved, not only in the educational field but especially in regard to the organisation. To mention a few: changing working-hours, the definition of the term "working-hour" itself, the actual status of a team that has followed an IVB-course in comparison to a team that has not, the settlement of questions like which organisation does what and when, what to do with changing teams, and so on and so forth.

But in spite of the fact that the problems are still manifold, the enthusiasm and energy with which the work is carried out by all participants prove that the optimism IVB started with was not unjustified.